

Now, my colleagues will say, oh, no one could have anticipated this, and how could we have known, and this was a disaster of untold magnitude, and those local officials, they did not do their job. But it is actually the Congress that has to bear a lot of the responsibility here. It was the Congress that agreed with the politically motivated plan out of the White House to stick FEMA into the Homeland Security bureaucracy. It was the Congress that agreed with the President to cut the budget of FEMA, to cut the disaster teams from three to two. And we wonder why they could not respond and why people died unnecessarily?

We need a fair and honest evaluation and investigation comparable to the 9/11 Commission to unearth the facts around this. There are things that need to be done besides restoring FEMA to an independent, professionally led agency status with a robust budget. We are also entering into the greatest rebuilding effort and restoration and relief effort in the history of our country. We need to see that those monies will not be misspent; that those monies will not go to crisis profiteers; that they will get to the people and the communities that need it and the rebuilding will be done appropriately; that we will invest in the infrastructure that was not invested in to protect New Orleans.

And it is not unique to New Orleans. I have jetties failing in the State of Oregon. The Corps of Engineers has no money to fix them. If they fail much more, it will cost 10 times as much to rebuild them. I have a dam that was failing in my district, and the corps had to scramble all around the country to find the money to begin to rebuild that dam. It is not their fault. Congress has not given them the funds, and the President has not recommended the funds to protect the American people from disaster.

So we need to invest not only in a reconstructed FEMA but also in a more robust budget for the Corps of Engineers for prevention. And we need to make certain the dollars we are borrowing, because every dollar of this is borrowed, are spent wisely. And maybe we should reconsider the tax cuts for people who earn over \$300,000 a year and have estates worth \$600,000. Maybe they should contribute to the recovery effort too.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. MCHENRY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. MCHENRY addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

IN MEMORY OF WILBUR MYRICK, A GREAT AMERICAN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mrs. MYRICK) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. MYRICK. Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor tonight to honor the memory of a great American, my father-in-law, Wilbur Myrick. He saw a lot of change during his 95 years on this Earth.

He lived during the time when indoor plumbing replaced outhouses and water wells, when wooden stoves were replaced by electric stoves, and when food no longer needed to be cooked fresh, but could be refrigerated and cooked in a microwave. He saw transportation change from a wheel and wagon to cars, buses, and then airplanes. And he even saw a man walk on the Moon. He saw great medical advances like the eradication of smallpox and the treatment of life-threatening diseases with advanced medicine and surgery. He saw communications change from mail to telephones to faxes and to e-mail.

He lived through World War I, World War II, Korea, Vietnam, the gulf war, and the war on terror. He saw America rise to a world superpower, and he saw the Iron Curtain spread across Europe only to see it crumble years later. He saw the tragedy at Pearl Harbor and the tragedy on 9/11. He saw leaders like Churchill and Roosevelt.

In his later years, Wilbur still kept up with current events. He would sit and watch C-SPAN and call me about specific bills. He could quote the bill number and tell me what it was and what it would do, and then he would ask what were we going to do about it.

□ 1815

It taught me a lot about him and how much he loved America. If only we had more Americans like Wilbur Myrick. At a time when most Americans are filled with apathy, he stood out as an example of who we should all strive to be. He was filled with hope, hope for a better tomorrow and for a better America.

Perhaps the best words to be said about him are from his granddaughter, Mia Myrick Alderman:

"My grandfather died last night.

"Granddaddy was old, very old. His 96th birthday is just over a month away. He is no longer languishing in a convalescent home, his body giving out more every day. He is free again and with the others, the others who have gone before him. My grandmother, his wife, who called him 'Myrick.' His large family, including a sister who died during the 1918 flu epidemic when my grandfather was 9 years old. He did not get sick and all by himself he cared for his family and their farm. A strong 9-year-old, my grandfather grew to be a strong man.

"He was not a complicated man. I do not know much about his life before me. I am the oldest of his five grandchildren, seven great-grandchildren and four great-great-grandchildren, but I know all about my granddaddy, who was just 51 when I was born.

"My grandfather is just another old man to die in a small North Carolina

town called Weldon. One of many who die every day, but to me he was a magical, special person. He was not in any way unique compared to all the other old men in Weldon, but when I went to visit my grandfather as a child he was very unique to me: His North Carolina-Virginia border accent; those southern sayings; the way he hugged me and laughed; the way his house and even the earth around his house smelled; the things he knew, secrets I thought only granddaddy knew, like how to thump a watermelon to see if it is ripe. I find myself doing that any time I buy one. I am not sure how it works, but I believe in magic. I loved my grandfather.

"I remember sitting on his lap as a very small child touching the black hair on his arm and I loved him. The last time I saw my grandfather in the hospital, I held his hand and looked at the hair on his arm, now barely there and I knew he would soon be free.

"When my grandfather died I lost forever a person and a culture that was magical and unique. Fascinating to me as a child and with me always in my child heart. My grandfather was a very unique and important man to me and I wanted to do this one last thing for him.

"As another old man from a little town called Weldon dies, so does my granddaddy, a very important man."

STORMS DO NOT RECOGNIZE STATE BOUNDARIES, WHY DOES FEMA?

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. DAVIS of Kentucky). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today, first of all, to thank the gentleman from New York (Mr. RANGEL), the gentleman from California (Chairman THOMAS) and the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. MCCRERY). It is because of their flexibility and sensitivity that the residents of Florida who suffered damage as a result of Hurricane Katrina are one step closer to getting emergency tax relief for those affected by the hurricane.

Today, we provided emergency tax relief for Floridians affected by Hurricane Katrina as well as for those affected in our neighboring States to our west. I am so pleased to have been able to come together with my Florida colleagues, Messrs. Foley, Diaz-Balart, and Shaw to make this possible.

As a Member of Congress that represents South Florida, I can empathize with the victims of Hurricane Katrina because my home, South Florida, has been struck by numerous hurricanes and is threatened by them every year.

The scenes of the destruction throughout Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama have reminded South Floridians of the devastation of Hurricane Andrew, a Category 5 hurricane which struck South Florida 13 years ago.

The pain of those who lost loved ones, their homes, their pets, and who now find themselves in temporary housing, thousands of miles from home, their pain is palpable and every Floridian's heart goes out to them. However, I rise tonight to call the Nation's attention to something that I think has been overlooked, understandably, by the Nation, and that is the plight of those residents in Florida who suffered damage because of Hurricane Katrina.

Hurricane Katrina's first victim was Florida as it struck the Broward and Miami-Dade counties as a Category 1 storm on August 25, leaving hundreds of damaged or destroyed homes in its wake. Many of the farmers and agricultural workers that grow and tend these crops that were damaged will be out of jobs or will lose significant income this year as a result of this storm.

Craig Fugate, Florida's emergency management chief, told FEMA officials last week that the State expects the loss of over 2,000 farm-related jobs in Miami-Dade County alone. Okra, malanga, sweet potato and cassava crops have been destroyed, he said, resulting in about a \$492 million loss.

That is why it came as a surprise to many homeowners in Florida when FEMA announced that it would not be providing individual assistance to residents of Florida who suffered damage as a result of Hurricane Katrina. I want to make it very clear what the effect of this decision means to the residents of South Florida who suffered damage in Hurricane Katrina.

This year, this is what FEMA will not pay for after Hurricane Katrina struck Florida. This woman here, who has had the roof ripped off her house and most of her possessions water damaged: FEMA's response to her, You are on your own, good luck.

How about this family here? This woman is standing in water up to her knees. Her cars are halfway submerged. These are not fancy cars. These are later model, 10-year-old cars. What was FEMA's response to her family's request for assistance? The same as it was to the people in New Orleans during the first days following Hurricane Katrina's aftermath when it hit the Gulf States: You are on your own.

My question to FEMA is this: Storms do not know State boundaries, so why does FEMA?

FEMA has set an arbitrary and discretionary threshold of 800 homes that have been destroyed or badly damaged as a result of Hurricane Katrina. Let me reiterate this is a purely discretionary number. Title 44 in the Code of Federal Regulations states, "There is no set threshold for recommending individual assistance."

It is estimated that more than half of the residents who need assistance with storm recovery in Broward and Miami-Dade counties live on less than \$20,000 a year. Yet FEMA denied Federal aid to those who qualified. Most of the mobile home residents in Broward im-

pacted by Katrina are primarily uninsured or underinsured.

My State has been hit by six hurricanes over the past year and a half. This is a constant plague that the residents of Florida deal with, and the denial of aid to those in need is irresponsible and unconscionable.

I introduced legislation last week that calls on FEMA to provide the much-needed assistance to the residents of Florida who are victims of Hurricane Katrina. I plead with my colleagues, as we did today with the Katrina Tax Relief bill, let us make sure we do not turn our backs on the first victims of Hurricane Katrina and give help to those in need, regardless of State line.

VALLE VIDAL PROTECTION ACT OF 2005

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Mexico (Mr. UDALL) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce the Valle Vidal Protection Act of 2005. The Valle Vidal is located in the heart of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains in northern New Mexico and is home to abundant populations of Rocky Mountain wildlife, including the largest herd of elk in our State. This "living valley" is an incredibly important ecological treasure whose value lies in its wilderness and natural beauty, not in its finite supply of energy.

The Valle Vidal is a special place for New Mexicans and people from around the world who come to relax in its alpine majesty and enjoy outdoor recreation and sporting opportunities. Boy Scouts from all over the country have come to the adjacent Philmont Scout Ranch for decades and each year spend thousands of hours doing conservation work and earning merit badges in the Valle Vidal.

Over the past 2 years, I have followed closely numerous events concerning the Valle Vidal. I have traveled to the Valle Vidal to witness its beauty, spoken with my constituents and others from the State, tracked political developments, and reviewed regulatory or policy initiatives undertaken by this administration. I have also received thousands of calls, e-mails, faxes, and letters against drilling and practically none in support of it. As a result, I have come to the inescapable conclusion that the Valle Vidal should be protected from oil and gas development.

The modern history of the Valle Vidal dates back to 1841 when Mexican Governor Manuel Armijo granted 1.7 million acres, the largest single landholding in the western hemisphere, to Guadalupe Miranda of Taos and a French trapper named Carlos Beaubien. This land grant, which included the 100,000 acre piece now known as Valle Vidal, is probably the most famous ever made by Mexico. It later became known as the Maxwell Land Grant

after Lucien Bonaparte Maxwell, a Kansan who married Beaubien's daughter and later became the sole owner of the vast property.

Thirty years ago, the Pennzoil Company purchased nearly 500,000 acres of this land, which they used as a hunting park. Pennzoil maintained the area as such until 1982 when it donated a 100,000-acre parcel of it to the Federal Government, which was at the time the largest donation in Forest Service history. Interestingly, no drilling was ever done in the Valle Vidal when Pennzoil owned it. What an ironic travesty it would be for the government to now turn its back on this unique gift and allow the area to be blighted.

I do not want the Valle Vidal to be opened up for drilling. New Mexicans and thousands of Americans are overwhelmingly against drilling in the refuge. These concerned citizens realize that the Valle Vidal's minimal contribution to our energy needs now is not worth despoiling such an important ecological and watershed system. The consequences are just too great.

Moreover, many of my constituents, as confirmed by recent economic studies, recognize that the protection of special public lands like Valle Vidal is good for local economies; and, in fact, exploration of these places for a few hours of energy will hurt long-term economic growth and community sustainability.

Fundamentally, drilling in the Valle Vidal to create more energy is a false choice. We must consider alternative and more effective measures for solving our Nation's energy needs. For example, an increased use of renewable fuels and improved fuel efficiency standards would contribute greatly to solving many energy-related problems. The key is to make the best renewable and alternate energy systems competitive with today's nonrenewable sources of energy so they can be developed for use in the United States and even for sale abroad. We simply cannot hope to drill our way to energy independence. The fact that this special place is being targeted for oil and gas leasing radically demonstrates what is wrong with this administration's energy policies.

In this case, the Forest Service's commitment to a leasing environmental impact statement, before the agency has even prepared a forest plan amendment, demonstrates that legislative action is necessary to ensure that the Valle Vidal's nonmineral resources and values are given the attention and protection they deserve. Moreover, the Forest Service, even with irrefutable reason to do so, is without the legal authority to permanently protect this special place from mineral development.

New Mexico is home to a strong oil and gas industry which I openly support. I believe there are many places suitable for oil and gas drilling. Valle Vidal, however, is not one of them.

Mr. Speaker, to that end, today I am introducing the Valle Vidal Protection Act to permanently protect the Valle Vidal from mineral